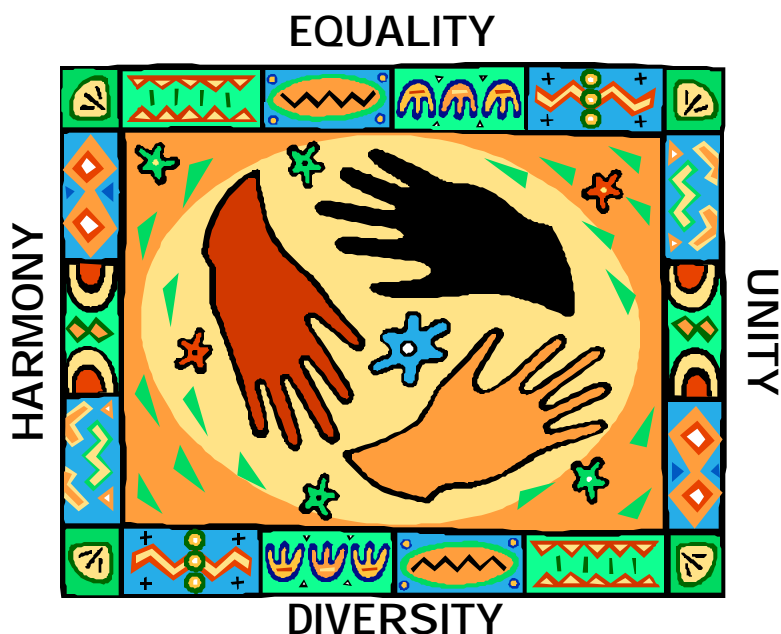




*Steve Levy*  
*County Executive*

# The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission



## **2009** **ANNUAL REPORT**

**Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss**  
**Chairperson**



**Paulette M. Bartunek**  
**Executive Director**

# COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**Steve Levy**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE



Dear Friends,

It is gratifying to note that 2009 was another successful year for the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission. The commission responded to more than 2,400 inquiries, providing advice and referrals to those with problems unrelated to discrimination, while investigating over 180 new cases of alleged unlawful discrimination.

The commission continues to utilize a streamlined and effective procedure for handling complaints involving the general public, to prevent lengthy backlogs. This system puts an emphasis on early mediation and conciliation, which benefits both parties. By using this system, the commission closed 171 discrimination complaint cases.

Newly enacted local legislation that I sponsored makes it more difficult now for co-ops to discriminate against buyers, providing the HRC with yet another tool in fighting housing discrimination. We have continued to do outreach to publicize this important law and to promote the county's 2007 Fair Housing Law.

The HRC also did extensive outreach in 2009 to publicize the recent change to the NY State Human Rights Law that makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against victims of domestic violence.

Diversity and equal rights are a constant focus of the commission. The HRC collaborated with other agencies and community groups in 2009 to plan and organize important events highlighting diversity and equal rights, such as Suffolk County Unity Day and the Council for Prejudice Reduction's conference, "Reducing Prejudice – A Matter of Education."

The HRC also conducted 10 training sessions about the Human Rights Law and the functions of the Commission to schools, community groups, and the police department.

We are encouraged that the commission's efforts and outreach were positively received in the feedback we received last year. As always, we recognize and appreciate the work of the commission as it fights to terminate discrimination and to ensure equal rights for all.

Very truly yours,

Steve Levy,  
Suffolk County Executive

# COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



Steve Levy  
suffolk county executive

department of law

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

paulette m. bartunek  
executive director

rabbi dr. steven a.  
moss

March 2010

County Executive Steve Levy  
Members of the Suffolk County Legislature  
County Attorney Christine Malafi  
People of Suffolk County

The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission is pleased to present our Annual Report for 2009.

Everyone who is part of the Commission is committed to the values that mean so much to all of us...mutual respect, an appreciation for our increasingly diverse community, equal employment opportunity, and the elimination of discrimination and bias-related violence. Along with numerous community groups and individuals who are dedicated to human rights, we continue to promote fair housing, employment rights, and strong enforcement of all the laws prohibiting discrimination. We do this through our community involvement, education and training programs, and, of course, through our main responsibility, the investigation and resolution of complaints of unlawful discrimination.

On a national level, 2009 was a very interesting year for civil rights activists. There was the inauguration of the first African American President, the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the passage of landmark hate crimes legislation, which finally expanded federal law to make it a crime to assault someone because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. We are, hopefully, making some headway in the fight for equal opportunity in this country.

On a local level, the Commission was extremely pleased that 2009 brought the reappointment of many of its long-standing members. The County Executive also appointed several distinguished new members – Dr. Edgar Borrero, Ms. Chestene Coverdale, and Dr. Yu-Wan Wang, who will surely bring a wealth of expertise and new insight to the Commission. We sincerely thank County Executive Steve Levy and the Suffolk County Legislature for these appointments, and for their continued support of our agency.

Suffolk County, though, like the rest of the nation, still has a long way to go toward increasing tolerance...and beyond that, reaching our dream of living in a society where every person understands that we are basically all the same; a society in which we all embrace our differences. Until that time comes, The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission members and staff will continue to work diligently toward a bias-free future, and we look forward to an even more productive year in 2010.

*Rabbi Steven A. Moss*

Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss  
Commission Chairperson

*Paulette M. Bartunek*

Paulette M. Bartunek  
Executive Director

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### THE SUFFOLK COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**Paulette M. Bartunek**, Executive Director

**Jennifer Blaske**, Principal Investigator

**James L. Kokindo, Jr.**, Investigator

**Lorena Gonzalez**, Investigator

**Cecilia Soto**, Spanish-speaking Investigator

**Barbara A. Johnson**, Clerk-Typist

**Egda Villalobos**, Spanish-speaking Clerk-Typist

*[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*It shall be the duty of the Commission . . .*

*To foster mutual respect and understanding among all groups in the community, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status or sexual orientation.*

*To make such studies in any field of human relationship in the community as, in the judgment of the Commission, will aid in effectuating its general purposes and, where desirable, to make the results of such studies public.*

*To inquire into incidents of tension and conflict among or between various groups arising out of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status or sexual orientation and to take such action as may be designated to alleviate such tensions and conflicts.*

*To conduct and recommend such educational programs as, in the judgment of the Commission, will increase goodwill among inhabitants of the community and open new opportunities into all phases of community life for all inhabitants.*

*To receive, accept, use, administer, and expend public grants and private gifts, donations, or bequests and other payments, goods, and services when authorized by local law or resolution of the County Legislature.*

*To investigate complaints and to report them to the New York State Division of Human Rights and/or to other public bodies so empowered, and investigate such cases alleging unlawful discrimination practices under Article 15 of the New York State Executive Law and related anti-discrimination laws.*

*To issue and promulgate such rules and regulations as it shall deem necessary and appropriate for the purpose of establishing procedures for the enforcement of Human Rights Local Law.*

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## **OVERVIEW**

The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission members and staff remain dedicated to preventing and eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting good will among the county's increasingly diverse residents. There are two key methods the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission (SCHRC) uses to further its mission.

First, the Commission is responsible for the receipt, investigation, resolution, and conciliation of discrimination complaints filed by individuals who believe they have been harmed by discrimination in housing, in the workplace, or in a place of public accommodation. By maintaining working relationships with other agencies that enforce anti-discrimination legislation at the state and federal levels, duplication of services is avoided. Suffolk County residents do not have to travel into New York City to file a federal charge, because they can file both a state and federal charge locally, right here at the SCHRC offices in Hauppauge or Riverhead. Their cases are investigated by a staff familiar with local issues and concerns. The importance of providing personal and timely service to those in distress, many of whom have lost their livelihoods, cannot be underestimated. The Commission prides itself not only on its ability to process complaints within a concise time frame, but also on its impartiality, level of professionalism, and the thoroughness of its investigations.

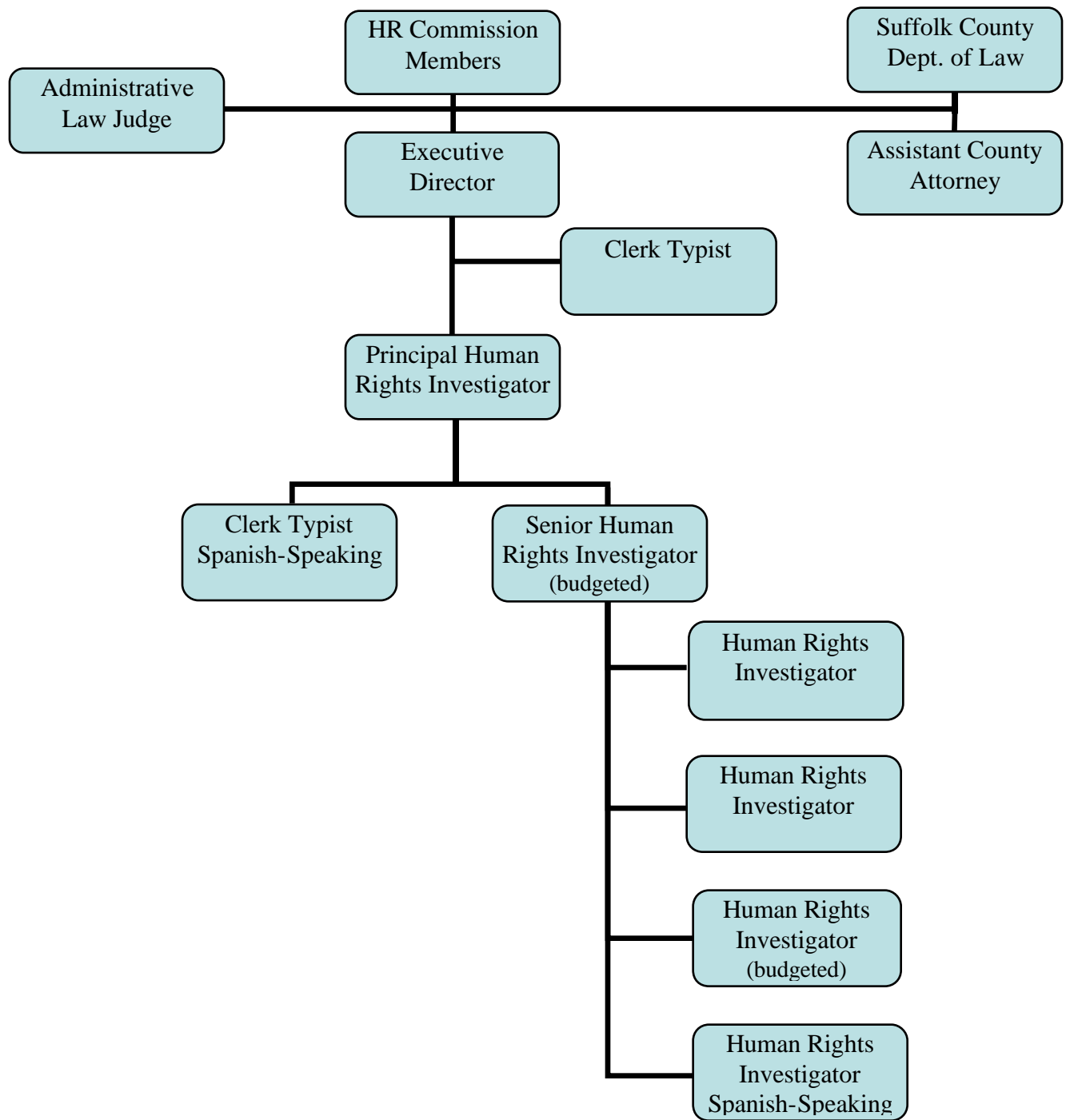
Our highly trained investigators diligently act on discrimination cases that are brought to our attention. It is vital to have effective enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, not only in the area of employment, which represents the majority of the complaints filed at the Commission, but in other areas as well, such as housing. Suffolk County has attempted to address the problem of our segregated suburbia by putting into effect its own housing discrimination law in 2007, which gives the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission full and independent enforcement authority relative to housing discrimination complaints.

The second way we work to further our mission is through community outreach and technical assistance to organizations and individuals to promote and encourage voluntary compliance with the law, and to promote positive intergroup relations. The Commission actively works to prevent racial tensions and community conflict related to bigotry and intolerance. It continues to work closely with businesses, government agencies, schools, private organizations, and community groups to foster equal opportunity. We provide training on various topics related to discrimination and the human rights law. Staff is also available to help employers and business owners who contact us with questions related to discrimination, to assist them in understanding how to remain in compliance with the law.

We encourage the citizens and business owners of Suffolk County to utilize our services.

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# Suffolk County Human Rights Commission Organizational Chart



## **2009 Accomplishments**

- Human Rights Commission (HRC) staff responded to over 2400 inquiries, investigated over 180 new cases of unlawful discrimination, and provided advice and referrals to those with problems unrelated to discrimination.
- In our continuing effort to streamline our investigative process and avoid backlog, we were able to close a total of 171 cases, all in a timely manner.
- Newly enacted local legislation now makes it more difficult for co-ops to discriminate against buyers, providing the HRC with yet another tool in fighting housing discrimination. We have continued to do outreach to publicize this as well as the County's 2007 Fair Housing Law.
- The HRC also did extensive outreach to publicize the recent change to the NY State Human Rights Law that makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against victims of domestic violence, and to let the public know that such complaints can now be filed with the Commission.
- We conducted 10 training sessions about the Human Rights Law and the functions of the Commission to schools, community groups, and the police department.
- Four new Commission members were appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the Legislature, and numerous holdovers were reappointed in 2009, solidifying everyone's terms and bringing all appointments up to date.
- The Commission held its bi-annual Awards Dinner, recognizing numerous individuals for the work they do to further equal rights for everyone; more than 100 people were in attendance.
- The HRC collaborated with other agencies and community groups to plan and organize important events highlighting diversity and equal rights, such as Suffolk County Unity Day and the Council for Prejudice Reduction's Conference, "Reducing Prejudice – A Matter of Education."
- We maintained ongoing communication with Suffolk County Police Commissioner Richard Dormer and the Commanding Officer of the Hate Crimes Unit, Det. Sgt. Robert Reecks. Through regular meetings, we kept abreast of new and ongoing initiatives within the police department related to human rights issues, such as the collection of racial profiling data, the compilation of statistics on hate crimes, community outreach efforts, and the processing and recording of complaints against police officers.
- Our Chairperson, Rabbi Dr. Steven Moss, was sworn in as a member of the Suffolk County Legislature's Hate Crimes Task Force. The Executive Director also attended all public hearings held by the Task Force.

## **COMMISSION MEMBERS**

*The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission was created in 1965 pursuant to New York State's General Municipal Law. The Commission has a paid staff including an Executive Director and six other staff members who carry out the investigations and other work of the agency. It also consists of fifteen Commission members, whose role is to set policy for the agency and to advocate for equality for all Suffolk residents. These fifteen dedicated individuals, who are appointed by the County Executive and approved by the Suffolk County Legislature, volunteer their time to serve on the Commission for three year terms. Many members have served several consecutive terms, and each has remained active and committed.*

*In the latter part of 2009, County Executive Steve Levy appointed four new Commission members, replacing those who decided to leave the Commission to move on to other activities. He also reappointed ten members who had been serving as holdovers. These important moves re-energized and reinvigorated the Commission, and we are looking forward to accomplishing much in the future in working toward a more just and fair society.*

*We are proud of the talented and diverse group of individuals who make room in their busy lives to commit themselves to the work of human rights.*

*The Commission also extends its thanks to the following members who served during 2009, and we wish them all the best in their future endeavors:*

**Patricia Hill Williams, Ed.D.**, (who served as a Commission member from 1989-2009);

**Howard A. Glickstein**, (served from 1992-2009);

**Alice T. Cone**, (served from 1996-2009);

**Mary C. Abad**, (served from 2002-2009); and

**Yves Michel**, who was newly appointed in September 2009 but subsequently left the Commission upon becoming Suffolk County's Commissioner of Economic Development and Workforce Housing.

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### **Current Commission Members**

**Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss**, Chairperson, was appointed to the Human Rights Commission in 1992. Rabbi Moss has served at the B'nai Israel Reform Temple in Oakdale as its spiritual leader since 1972. He was initially appointed Chairperson of the County's Anti-Bias Task Force by former County Executive Patrick Halpin, and has been appointed Chair (and later co-chair) of the task force for each of the subsequent years by County Executives Robert Gaffney and Steve Levy. He serves as Deputy Chief of Chaplains for the Suffolk County Police Department, the Chiefs of Police Association, the Police Association, and serves as chaplain to many local hospitals and senior facilities. He received his undergraduate degree from New York University, and his graduate degrees and ordination from the Hebrew Union College in New York. He was the recipient of the District Attorney's Distinguished Citizen Award, and Chaplain of the Year 1987 and Rabbi of the Year 2007 awards, given by the New York Board of Rabbis. In 2009, he received the Lehman-LaGuardia Award for Civic Achievement. In 2003, he was appointed to the Board of the Suffolk Center on the Holocaust, Diversity, and Human Understanding. He is the longest sitting member of the Islip Town Board of Ethics. He is Chair of the Islip Town Anti-Bias Task Force and he also serves on the boards of VIBS and SNAP.

**Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, MSW, CSW**, Vice Chair, was appointed to the Commission in 2002 and was elected Vice Chair in 2003. She is a graduate of Adelphi University and the School of Social Welfare at Stony Brook University, and holds a certification in conflict resolution from Cornell University. Ms. Perdomo-Ayala is the Department Administrator to the Pharmacological Sciences Department at Stony Brook University's Health Sciences Center. At Stony Brook, she also serves as an advisor to the Latin American Student Organization, and is a member of the advisory board of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center, and is currently Chair of the Board. She has worked extensively in the community as a member of the National Association of Puerto Rican and Hispanic Social Workers, the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc., and the Suffolk County Executive's Hispanic Advisory Board, and she is a board member and current President of the Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk, Inc. Ms. Perdomo-Ayala has received many awards and honors, including the "Woman of Distinction" Award from La Union de Mujeres Americanas in Puerto Rico, and a Certificate of Appreciation from the Bethel AME Church of Setauket for her outstanding service and commitment to the community. Most recently, she received recognition from Stony Brook University as Distinguished Alumni for University Service, she was a recipient of the New York State Social Worker of the Month, and was named Local Hero by Bank of America and Distinguished Social Worker by the National Association of Social Workers, Latino Social Work Task Force. Together with some staff at the University, she founded the Multicultural Women's Alliance at Stony Brook University to bring women of all cultures, religions and ages together. She is an educator, mentor, and a committed activist for all under-served communities, and as Vice Chair of the Commission, she heads its Administrative Committee.

**Edgar Borrero, M.D.**, newly appointed to the Human Rights Commission in 2009, is a board certified general and vascular surgeon. He earned a B.S. degree from St. John's University and his M.D. from New York Medical College. He completed his general surgery residency training at Long Island Jewish Medical Center and his vascular surgery fellowship in Atlanta, Georgia. He was an Assistant Professor of Surgery at the University of Maryland Shock Trauma prior to joining the surgical staff at Good Samaritan Hospital, West Islip, New York. He was a Professor of Surgery at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine, and a Professor of Human Anatomy at Touro College of Health Science. Dr. Borrero served ten years with the United States Army Medical Corps, serving on active duty in Saudi Arabia and Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He joined the Bayport Fire Department in 1999 as the Department Surgeon and he is also a Fire Police Officer. He is an EMT instructor for the Community Ambulance of Sayville. In 2000, he was certified as a Suffolk County EMS Field Surgeon. He has extensive training in Advanced Trauma Life Support, Weapons of Mass Destruction, FEMA Incident Management, Hazardous Materials First Responder, FEMA Incident Safety Officer, and Confined Space, Heavy and Trench Rescue. Dr. Borrero has received over thirty awards including the Distinguished Academic Surgeon Award from the Health and Sciences Associates of America in 1988, United States Senate Order of Merit in 1994, United States Congressional Order of Merit in 2003 and America's Top Surgeon Award in 2005. He has published thirty eight scientific articles in medical journals and is the co-producer of a training film at the American College of Surgeons. He is a member of the Commission's Immigration Committee and co-chairs our Health Committee.

**Chestene Coverdale**, also appointed to the Commission in 2009, is presently an adjunct professor at Dowling College, where she is also Supervisor of Student Teachers. Mrs. Coverdale retired from

the classroom after 28 years of teaching. She is currently the Executive Director of the Greater Sayville Food Pantry, and as past President of the Rotary Club of Sayville, her motto is “service above self.” Mrs. Coverdale’s commitment to community service and education has earned her and the community many honorary acknowledgements and awards. Mrs. Coverdale serves on the Commission’s Education, Health, and Immigration Committees.

**Rachel Lee Davis**, appointed to the Commission in 1998, served as Vice Chair for over two years and initiated the Commission’s Human Rights Community-Based Organization Award. She earned a B.S. Degree from Alcorn State University, Mississippi, an M.A. Degree, Secondary Education, from New York University; and holds NY State Certification in Health Education, Science, and Social Studies. Mrs. Davis has a record of service with the American Cancer Society, the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, the Heart and Diabetes Associations, and the Uganda Children’s “Tour of Light” which raises money for AIDS awareness. She is the Founding Vice-Chair of The Witness Project L.I., Breast Cancer in African American Women, L.I. Cancer Care. Mrs. Davis is a Trustee of SUNY’s Old Westbury College Foundation, Inc., founder/first President of Eastern Shore, The Links, Inc.; co-founder/first President, Sigma Psi Omega, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; past board Chair of Benincasa Family Services, Inc., Amityville, N.Y.; a member of the NAACP; and founding officer of the Coalition of 100 Black Women Suffolk County. She has received numerous awards for leadership and humanitarian services, including the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Meritorious Service Award, First Baptist Church of Riverhead; “Paving the Way To Success”, County Executive Robert J. Gaffney’s African American Advisory Board; A Leader Making A Difference, American Diabetes Association; Partners in Preaching Leadership, Sisters of St. Dominic, Amityville, N.Y.; Outstanding Woman in the Town of Babylon; Frederick Douglas Memorial Award, Islip Chapter L.I. Council of African American Republicans; National Outstanding Secondary Educators of America; and the 2007 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drum Major Award, Hollywood Baptist Cathedral, Amityville, N.Y. She was elected 2007 trustee of Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and she received the 2009 Suffolk County Republican Women’s Political Volunteer Award. Mrs. Davis is a member of the Commission’s Housing Committee.

**Michele T. Del Monte** was reappointed to the Commission in April 2002, having previously served from 1993 to 1997. Ms. Del Monte’s background, training and experience are in public policy, health sciences, education and human services – including advocacy on aging, disability, health, housing and poverty issues. She serves on the Board of the Middle Country Library Foundation, the Renewal Resources Board, the Suffolk County Local Early Intervention Coordinating Council, the Suffolk County Long Term Care Council, and the Long Island Task Force on Literacy. In 2006, she was the recipient of Suffolk Community Council’s Maxine Postal Human Dignity Award, and helped the Council establish a Network of Women with Disabilities to increase access to health care through print material, health literacy, and physical accessibility to health provider’s offices. Ms. Del Monte is an active member of the Commission’s Education, Health, Housing, Immigration and Junior Human Rights Committees, and chairs the Employment Committee. As a follow-up to her involvement with the Health Committee, Ms. Del Monte has joined the Insurance Committee of the Suffolk County Minority Health Action Coalition and represents the Commission on the Suffolk County Women’s Advisory Council and the Diversity Committee of the Association of Fund Raising Professionals of LI. Ms. Del Monte is also a member of the Community Leaders Advisory

Committee of the Stony Brook University Medical Center, and the President's Multi-Cultural Advisory Council at SUNY Stony Brook.

**Mark J. Epstein, Esq.** was appointed to the Commission in 2008. Mr. Epstein is a partner in the law firm of Pazer, Epstein & Jaffe, P.C. He earned a B.S. degree from The American University and his J.D. from New York Law School. He is admitted to practice law in New York, New Jersey and the District of Columbia. His memberships include the Suffolk County Bar Association, Nassau County Bar Association, New York County Lawyers Association, American Association for Justice, Huntington Lawyers Club, Jewish Lawyers of Nassau County and he sits on the Board of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association. He is also a representative to the Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council and the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. Mr. Epstein is also a member of the Long Island Association and the Huntington Township Chamber of Commerce. He is a strong advocate of civil and human rights and has been awarded the B'nai B'rith Humanitarian Award. Mr. Epstein serves on the Commission's Administration of Justice Committee.

**Nayyar Imam** was appointed to the Commission in 2003. Mr. Imam, who immigrated to the United States from Pakistan, has been active in the pharmaceutical field and is currently Supervising Pharmacist at Coram Drugs. He is also a consultant pharmacist for IGHL, Maryhaven Centers of Hope, and the Epilepsy Foundation. He is on the Citizen's Advisory Boards to the Suffolk County Police Commissioner as well as the Suffolk County Department of Social Services. He is currently President of the Islamic Association of Long Island (2008-2010) and had previously served in that capacity from 2000 to 2003. Prior to serving as President, Nayyar Imam was Secretary of the Association from 1997 to 1998, and in 2004 was elected to Chairman of Public Relations and Vice Chair of their Board of Trustees. He is also a Board Member of Peconic Community Council. He is the Chairperson of Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy's Muslim American Advisory Board, and he serves on the Human Rights Commission's Education, Health, and Immigration Committees.

**Augustus G. Mantia, M.D.**, appointed to the Commission in 1998, is an Associate Professor of Medicine, Family Practice and Psychiatry at Stony Brook University. Dr. Mantia has had a clinical practice in the Smithtown Community for over 30 years, and he is a strong proponent of equality in health care. In 2005, Dr. Mantia, in conjunction with Stony Brook University and the First Baptist Church of Riverhead, received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for Project Care, a program to develop computer home monitoring for chronic medical conditions. Dr. Mantia was also appointed to the NY State Department of Health's Medicaid Advisory Committee by the NY Senate and Governor George Pataki. Dr. Mantia volunteers his time to serve his community as the Hauppauge Volunteer Fire Departments' Surgeon who oversees all medical response and protocols for the Emergency Medical Response Teams and defibrillator programs. In July 2008 Dr. Mantia was appointed as a Deputy Fire Coordinator-Medical Doctor for the County of Suffolk. In 2008 he was also selected for appointment to the position of Critical Incident Police Surgeon for the Suffolk County Police Department. His appointment followed successful completion of critical training in FEMA Incident Management, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Police Department field operations and protocols, and certification as a Field Physician by the Suffolk County Department of Health Division of EMS. Dr. Mantia has been acknowledged as a "Hometown Humanitarian" from the Suffolk County Legislature and was presented a proclamation recognizing his service to the

residents of Suffolk County. Commissioner Mantia serves as co-chair of the Health Committee and chair of the Commission's Housing Committee.

**Gary R. Mar, Ph.D.**, appointed to the Commission in 2005, is a Professor of Philosophy at Stony Brook University, where he teaches logic, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of religion, and Asian American philosophy. Founder and director of the Asian American Center, he was a catalyst for the Charles B. Wang Asian American Center, which was established at that time by the largest private donation in the history of the public education system in NY State. Dr. Mar has been an advocate for and active teacher of Asian American studies at Stony Brook University since 1995 and serves on a number of community boards, including the Council for Prejudice Reduction and Community Advisory Board for Public Television WLIW21. Dr. Mar was also the founder and first president of the Asian American Faculty Staff Association and is currently chair of the American Philosophical Association (APA) Committee on the status of Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies. He has been a recipient of the Outstanding Professor Award from the Alumni Association at Stony Brook, the President's and Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching from SUNY, and the Pew Foundation Evangelical Scholar's Fellowship. In 2005, he was honored with a Civil Advocacy Achievement Award from the Organization of Chinese Americans, Long Island, and has administered grants to conduct workshops on hate crimes from the Allstate Foundation and the Organization of Chinese Americans, an Asian American civil rights advocacy group based in Washington, DC. Dr. Mar chairs the Commission's Education Committee and is also a member of our Immigration Committee.

**Carolyn G. Peabody, Ph.D.**, was appointed to the Commission in 1997. Dr. Peabody is the Assistant Dean for the East End Campus and Community of the School of Social Welfare at Stony Brook University. She is the Commission's liaison to the Southold and Southampton Town Anti-Bias Task Forces. Dr. Peabody is involved in many community organizations, such as the Peconic Community Council, and is a co-founder of Southolders for Social Justice. She chairs the Commission's Justice Committee and is also a member of our Immigration Committee.

**Rajeshwar Prasad** was appointed to the Commission in 1999. Mr. Prasad is a former executive in the field of health planning, development and implementation with various nonprofit organizations, last being Long Island Cancer Council where he served (1977-1981) as Principal Investigator and Executive Director. He is an active volunteer associated with many nonprofit groups, such as the India Association of Long Island since its inception in 1976 (past President), National Indo-American Association for Senior Citizens (NIAASC - Founder and President until 2004), currently serving as its Executive Director, also an honorary position, and the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) since its inception in 1989. In 2009 he led a conference at the GOPIO convention on "The Living Pioneers – A Global Perspective of India Elders." The conference panel was composed of leaders from USA, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Middle East. In 2009 he was recognized for his community services by Nassau County Executive, Tom Suozzi, at the India American Night in Eisenhower Park, sponsored by the Indo American Forum. Mr. Prasad served on the Health Panel of the Allocation Committee of the United Way of Long Island (vice chair) for over 19 years, until 2003. Raj Prasad came to the United States in 1969 after a one-year stay in Paris, France on an exchange program, and has been a resident of Suffolk County since 1971. He is

an active member of the Commission's Justice and Awards Committees, and chairs the Immigration Committee.

**Yu-wan Wang, Ed.D.**, is another Commission member who was newly appointed in 2009. She is currently Associate Dean for International Admissions at Stony Brook University. Prior to that, she served as Director for International Student and Scholar Services at Dowling College. From 1999 to 2002 she worked as a consultant in Taipei, Taiwan, conducting research and advising leaders on the establishment of an International Affairs Commission for Taipei County government. She was a Fulbright Fellow for U.S. Administrators in International Education, 2005-2006 and has received numerous other honors and awards.

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**Paulette M. Bartunek, Executive Director**

Paulette Bartunek began her employment at the Commission in 1980 as an Investigator. She received several promotions through the years, and the Commission appointed her as Executive Director in 2002. She attended SUNY College at Fredonia and SUNY Buffalo as an undergraduate, majoring in sociology and women's studies, and in 1992 she earned a Master's Degree in Labor and Industrial Relations, with a concentration in Human Resources Management, from the New York Institute of Technology. Ms. Bartunek has been very active in the community and is committed to furthering equal opportunity. She served for over ten years as a board member of both the Suffolk Chapter of the NY Civil Liberties Union and Long Island Housing Services, Inc. and she was also a long-time member of the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Board. In the fall of 2008 she became an adjunct instructor at Dowling College. She is currently a board member of Suffolk Community Council, Inc.; an Advisory Board member of the Suffolk Center on the Holocaust, Diversity, and Human Understanding; a member of the Suffolk County Anti-Bias Task Force, a member of the Unity Coalition; and a member of the Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board.

## **STANDING COMMITTEES**

The Commission's committee structure facilitates a closer examination of specific areas of concern to the Commission and the community. The following is a brief description of the committees:

### **Administrative Committee**

**Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, C.S.W., Chair**

The Administrative Committee is the forum that brings the Chairs of all committees together to coordinate and cooperate on a wide range of substantive and administrative issues facing the Human Rights Commission. Headed by the Vice Chair of the Commission, the group is responsible for convening key working groups that effectively serve as focus groups for the community at large to carefully consider the accomplishments, opportunities, and challenges presented by the individual committees.

### **Administration of Justice Committee**

**Carolyn G. Peabody, Ph.D., Co-Chair**

**Mark Epstein, Esq., Co-Chair**

The Administration of Justice Committee has been actively working with Suffolk County Police Commissioner Richard Dormer for the past several years on matters of concern to the Commission. Several meetings with the Commissioner and other police officials were held in 2009 to discuss issues such as:

- the police department's case management system to track complaints and incidents involving the use of force;
- review of the quarterly discipline report issued to the Commission by the Internal Affairs Bureau;
- the police protocol for equal enforcement of the law and equal service to the public regardless of immigration status;
- policies and procedures regarding the designation of "hate crime" to incidents involving bias;
- community outreach efforts and police response to the Marcelo Lucero murder;
- the recording of racial data on stops and searches, and the potential ramifications of racial profiling if an officer violates policy;
- the Internal Affairs complaint process, actions taken against police officers who are disciplined for various offenses, and civilian and Commission involvement in the complaint process;
- police policies regarding allocation of personnel to respond to crime scenes located in minority and/or working class communities; and
- increasing minority representation within the police service.

The Justice Committee also meets in response to other issues that arise, such as pending legislation which could negatively affect a particular community.

## **Employment Committee**

### **Michele Del Monte, Chair**

Employment discrimination continues to represent the largest number of inquiries the agency receives, as has been the case in previous years. Allegations reported to the Commission include unlawful discrimination resulting in denial of promotion, failure to hire someone qualified for the job, unequal treatment or pay, or subjection to a hostile work environment. In 2010 the Employment Committee is planning to host a seminar directed to employers highlighting the recent addition of victims of domestic violence as a protected category in employment situations.

## **Housing Committee**

### **Augustus G. Mantia, M.D., Chair**

The Commission is very concerned about racial segregation in Suffolk and the local fair housing law, which became effective on January 29, 2007, has enhanced the enforcement authority of the Commission with regard to housing discrimination complaints. In 2009, a new local law was passed which will make it more difficult for the boards of co-op complexes to discriminate in their approval process. The Housing Committee will continue to be instrumental in getting word out to the public about the various changes in the law and how to have complaints of housing discrimination addressed through the Commission. The committee also has an interest in examining other areas related to housing that impact various communities.

## **Health Committee**

### **Augustus G. Mantia, M.D., Co-Chair Edgar Borrero, M.D., Co-Chair**

The Health Committee's focus has been on racial and ethnic disparities in health care. In 2006, 2007, and 2008, the Commission collaborated with Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy's Office of Minority Health on its Health Disparities Conference entitled "Taking the Road to Eliminate Health Disparities: Tools for Action and Advocacy." The committee plans to continue to respond to health issues of concern to the Commission and the community.

## **Education Committee**

### **Gary R. Mar, Chair**

One of the concerns that the Education Committee began to address back in 2004 was the issue raised by some members of the community that there are too few minority teachers in many school districts throughout Suffolk. Other areas of concern brought to the Commission's attention had to do with the quality of education received by minority students and discrepancies within the educational system. In previous years, the Education Committee held several public forums entitled "The Miseducation of Children of Color," addressing suspensions and disciplinary issues, the assignment of minorities to special education programs, and other issues of importance to the community.

A current concern of the Education Committee is the widespread public misperception that immigration and the increasing immigrant population of Suffolk County is merely an economic or legal problem. It is also a matter of education, since those groups with higher education levels ultimately contribute more economically to the society. A current initiative of the Education Committee is to explore ways of working with other organizations, such as the Council for Prejudice Reduction, to make use of the County's evolving diversity as an asset, to create a world class education. The committee is also planning a "Junior Human Rights Day" for middle and high school students to involve them in a learning experience related to the issues addressed by all the SCHRC committees.

### **Immigration Committee**

#### **Rajeshwar Prasad, Chair**

This committee, newly formed in the latter part of 2008, will be looking at the critical issues that arise in Suffolk County related to immigration and our increasingly diverse population. In 2009 the Committee deliberated on its proposed tasks and determined that the Commission should initiate and develop an ongoing dialog with various immigrant groups. In November 2009, representatives from various Latino groups came before the Commission to express their concerns and identify issues related to that community; and a very interactive and productive discussion ensued. Future plans include invitations to groups working with the Muslim community and the Asian community to meet with the HRC. The committee will then hold a joint meeting to establish the commonalities and differences between the concerns of the various groups, and determine how the Commission can be instrumental in alleviating some of the problems brought to our attention.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION INVESTIGATIVE STATISTICS 2009**

Telephone Contacts:.....	2261
Mail and Email Inquiries:.....	47
Personal Interviews:.....	186

<b>TOTAL REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE:</b>	<b>2494</b>
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<b>TOTAL CASES OPENED</b>	<b>182</b>
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*Jurisdictional Area:*

Employment.....	118
Public Accommodation.....	10
Education.....	3
Housing.....	20
Credit.....	0
Volunteer Fire Department.....	1
Police.....	13 *
Correctional Facility.....	0
Other.....	17

*Protected Categories:*

Sex.....	19
Race.....	56
Color.....	29
Age.....	25
National Origin.....	25
Disability.....	37
Creed.....	4
Arrest / Conviction Record.....	13
Marital Status.....	0
Sexual Orientation.....	2
Retaliation.....	8
Other.....	46

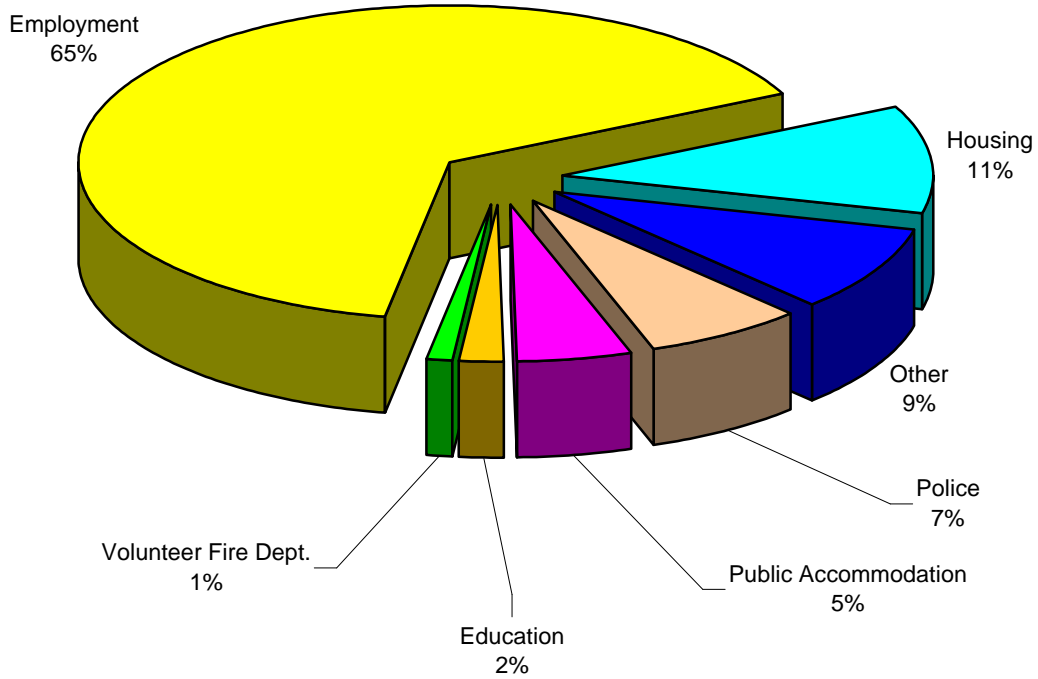
<b>TOTAL CASES CLOSED:</b>	<b>171</b>
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*Reasons for Closings:*

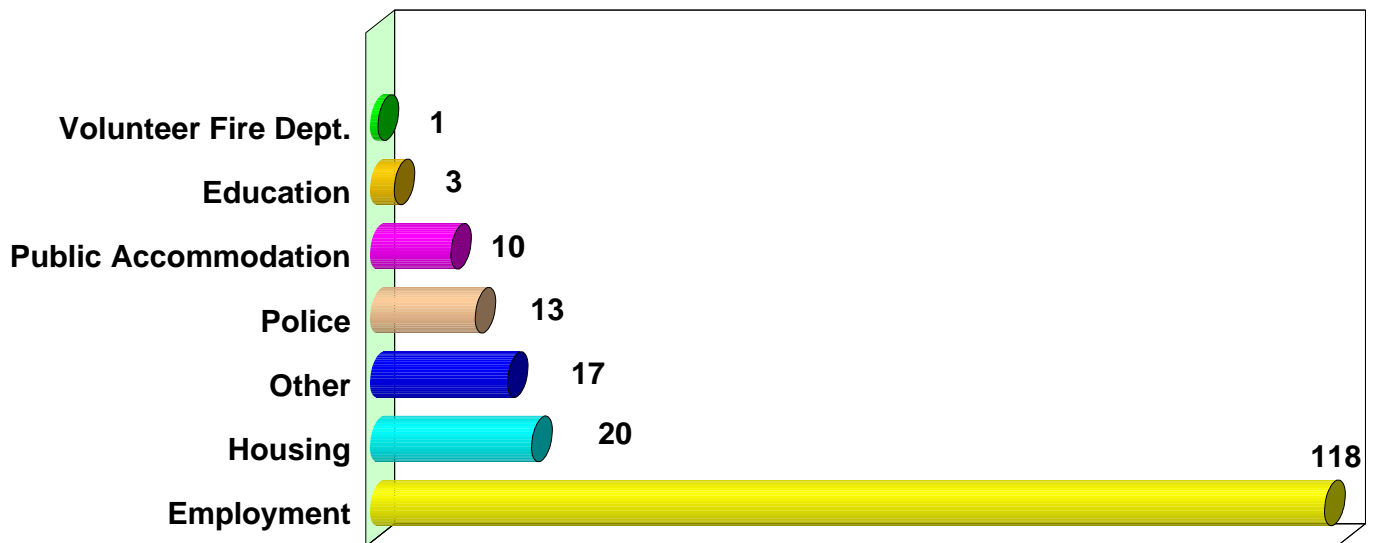
Insufficient basis for complaint.....	39
Trans. to NYSDHR pursuant to MOU.....	10
Complainant failed to pursue.....	22
Determined to be non-jurisdictional.....	47
Complaint withdrawn.....	26
Conciliated.....	7
"No Probable Cause" recommendation to State.....	7
"Probable Cause" recommendation to State.....	6
Complainant pursuing in Federal Court.....	0
Withdrawn w/ Benefits.....	2
Other.....	5

\*Includes allegations against the Suffolk County Police Department  
and all other local police departments (town, village, etc.)

# Cases Opened by Jurisdictional Area - 2009

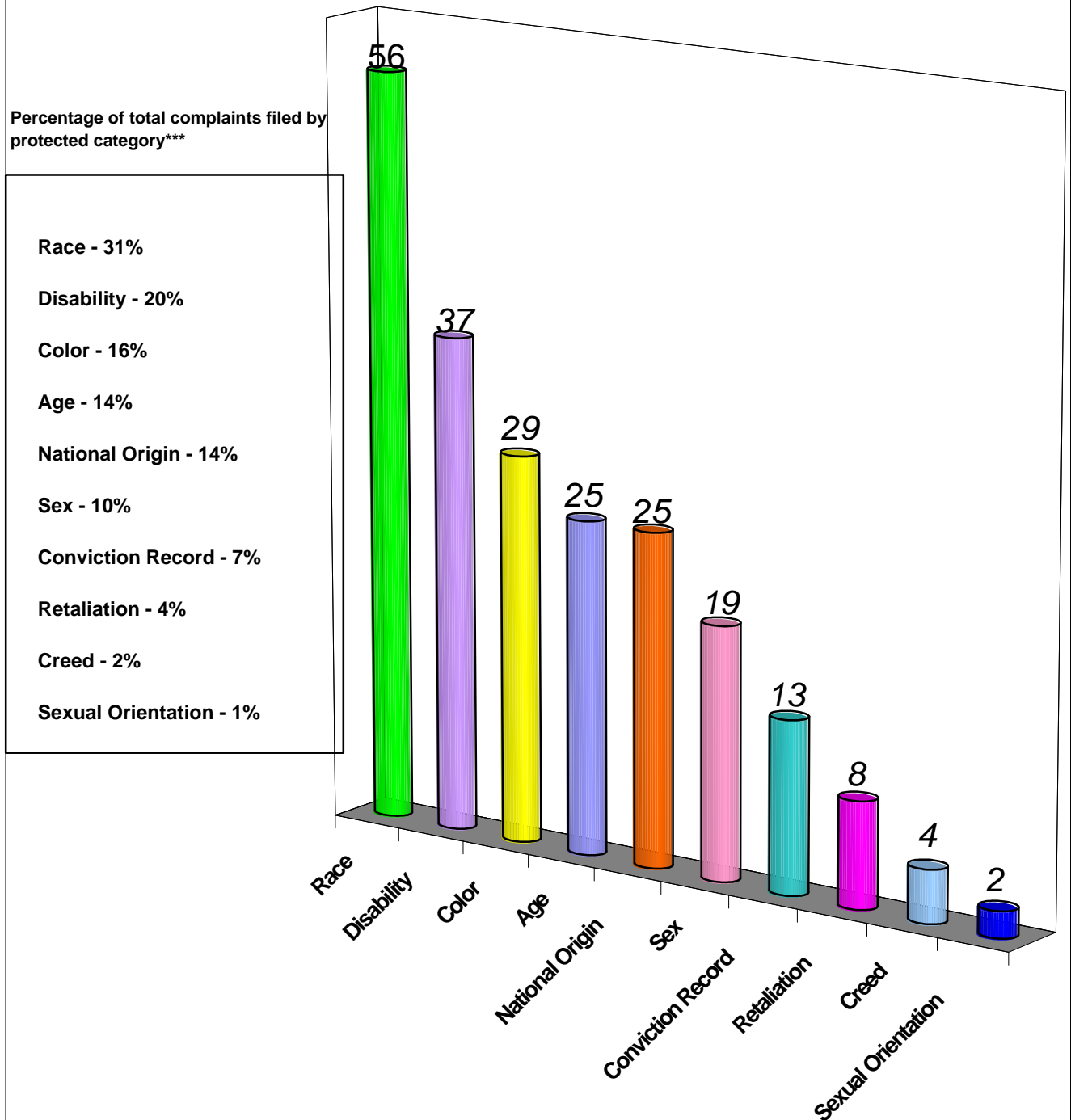


## Actual number of cases opened



# Protected Categories - 2009

Number of complaints filed under each category protected by law



\*\*\*The percentages total over 100% because individuals often file a complaint under more than one protected category.

## **CASE CONCILIATIONS**

The Commission encourages the early resolution of complaints, and as such, conciliation is left open as an option throughout the investigative process. The expediting of cases and the avoidance of further legal proceedings can be advantageous to both parties.

When monetary damages have accrued, every effort is made to obtain restitution for the complainant in the settlement process. In many instances, people who feel harmed by discrimination do not seek our assistance with a focus on a monetary settlement, and resolutions can often come in other forms – for example a neutral reference, an accommodation for a disability, or the elimination of a hostile work environment. Sometimes, changes in company policy have the most long-lasting and significant effect.

For example, one complainant alleged that a local retailer routinely made African American shoppers leave their backpacks or large bags up front by the cash registers while they shopped, yet did not impose the same on white customers. When the complainant protested, he was banned from the store and told he could never shop there again. A Caucasian investigator from the Commission went to shop at the store, carrying a backpack, and made certain that store employees could clearly see what he was carrying. He was not approached. While he was there, however, a black male entered the store, and was immediately told he had to leave his backpack by the cash registers. When the respondent was initially informed of the complainant's allegations, the company denied that the store manager utilized such a discriminatory practice. When presented with the results of our investigation, however, the store company agreed to resolve the matter without the necessity of formal charges being filed. The complainant was once again able to shop at the store, which was important to him because it is right near the public transportation route that he regularly uses. Additionally, he was given \$1,500.00 for having to go through such a humiliating experience. Perhaps most importantly, the company provided employee training about discrimination, and its security policies are no longer carried out in a discriminatory manner.

During 2009, we were able to resolve several cases relating to disability discrimination. One person, who alleged that the president of the company he worked for made derogatory remarks about his learning disability, including calling him a "retard," agreed to settle the matter for \$5,000.00 in lost wages. Another, who suffered from severe depression, felt she was forced to resign because her supervisor allegedly treated her much more harshly than her co-workers. She received \$4,250.00, the amount of money she lost between the time of her resignation and the time she found alternate employment. Another woman with mental health issues came to the Commission because she wanted unemployment benefits. She said she felt pressured into resigning from her position at a school after her employer became aware of her diagnosis. Although there was no evidence to indicate that school officials did have specific knowledge of her disability, a settlement was negotiated that included unemployment insurance benefits as well as a neutral reference for the complainant.

Throughout the year, the Commission received complaints relating to every protected category. A Hispanic female of Dominican descent charged that she had been passed over for promotions and denied full-time employment because of her national origin. After the Commission intervened, she was offered the full-time position she requested, which she accepted. She now receives \$36,000 per year plus benefits. A sixty-five-year-old woman alleged that she was discriminated against based on her age when her employment was terminated after a new store manager was hired. She claimed that the manager made comments about wanting to get rid of all the older workers. The respondent

asserted that the complainant was dismissed because she was insubordinate when she left early without permission, a fact that was not disputed by the complainant. The case was conciliated for \$1,500.00. A gay male came to the Commission alleging that he had his hours reduced and then was fired because of his sexual orientation. Company officials were able to provide evidence that indicated that he was actually laid off due to lack of work, but they agreed to provide one week of severance pay to the complainant. A woman who had received assistance from the Commission when she had a pregnancy discrimination complaint alleged that her employment was terminated in retaliation for filing the complaint. She did not wish to return to the job, but received \$5,000 in settlement of the matter, as well as a neutral reference.

The above are some examples of the types of complaints we received during the year that we were able to conciliate.

We also had our first administrative hearing on a housing case this year, under the County's fair housing law that became effective in 2007. The Commission found "probable cause" on a matter alleging a violation of that law based on sexual orientation and the case was heard before an administrative law judge. In early 2010, a formal determination was issued by the Executive Director which incorporated the recommendations of the judge, including injunctive relief. We anticipate that we will be utilizing this independent enforcement authority more often in the future as more people come forward with their housing discrimination complaints.

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## **THE INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS**

*The following section describes the process followed in the investigation of complaints received by the Commission. We have repeated this information in each of our Annual Reports, due to the positive feedback we receive indicating that people find this section extremely informative.*

### **INTAKE**

The first step in the process is Intake. Individuals who believe that they have been discriminated against may telephone, write, email, or come into our office and speak to an investigator about their situation. An extensive intake interview is then conducted to obtain all the pertinent facts, advise the complainant of what additional steps they can take, and explain our process and the complainant's various options.

Unlike some other government agencies, the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission is a neutral fact-finding agency and is not an advocate for those who have filed charges. While the Commission respects the fact that those individuals who make allegations believe they have been discriminated against, in order for the Commission to determine reasonable cause, there must be evidence to show that the alleged discriminatory basis was the reason for the respondent's actions. The complainant's belief alone is not sufficient to establish that.

### **INFORMAL INQUIRY**

Often, there is a situation which is not within SCHRC's area of jurisdiction. In those situations, our staff members carefully evaluate the information and make appropriate referrals to other agencies that can better serve those callers' immediate needs. For instance, many individuals are referred to the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor for alleged violations of the Family Medical Leave Act or the Fair Labor Standards Act. In 2009, staff responded to over 1,700 inquiries that required a referral.

Sometimes, the problem can be resolved informally, without the need for a formal complaint. A great number of our cases never have to go to a formal filing. At the local level, we have the flexibility to attempt to clarify the situation and/or to settle the matter by a letter of inquiry to the respondent and subsequent conversations with both parties. This method is very effective in weeding out complaints that have little or no merit or which turn out to be non-jurisdictional for some reason (for example, if the employer has too few employees to be covered by the law). On the other hand, cases that present strong evidence early on to substantiate the complainant's allegations can often be settled quickly, to the benefit of both parties.

### **COMPLAINT FILED**

When the situation cannot be resolved informally, or when the individual wishes to file a formal complaint, the intake investigator will secure all relevant information available from the individual and draft the formal complaint of discrimination for the complainant's notarized signature. Depending upon the circumstances of the complaint, these formal charges will be filed under local Suffolk County Law, N.Y. State Human Rights Law, and/or the various federal laws.

### **COMPLAINT SERVED**

If the complaint is a public accommodation or employment matter, it is transmitted to the NY State Division of Human Rights via our computerized case management system, and assigned a state complaint number. If the complaint is also being filed pursuant to federal law, it will also be sent to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and it will have a federal charge number assigned. Housing cases alleging violations of our local law are processed internally by the Commission. The complaint is served on the respondent by mail, along with a request for necessary records and documentation.

### **RESPONDENT ANSWER**

The respondent has fifteen days to file a formal answer to the charges. The Commission will grant extensions under certain limited circumstances.

### **COMPLAINANT REBUTTAL**

The answer filed by the respondent is usually sent to the complainant, with a request for their written rebuttal. If the complainant has difficulty, they are encouraged to meet with the investigator to give a verbal rebuttal. Depending on the situation, sometimes the rebuttal process can be undertaken by telephone or email.

Every complainant is offered the opportunity to show that the alleged discriminatory basis was the reason for the respondent's actions. However, the Commission determines the level of investigation necessary, and in doing so, determines which documentation and witness testimony is needed to address the issues raised.

### **WITNESS INTERVIEWS**

The witnesses named by each party are contacted and interviewed about the circumstances surrounding the complaint. The Commission recognizes that individuals who are still employed by a respondent company may be too intimidated to be totally forthcoming; by the same token, individuals who no longer work for a company may be disgruntled employees whose opinions may be tainted. Nonetheless, witness statements can be a valuable tool in ascertaining the validity of a charge.

### **FACT-FINDING CONFERENCE**

In many cases, the next step of the investigation is a two party fact-finding conference conducted by the executive director or her designee (the principal investigator or an investigator). A fact-finding conference is not a formal hearing, but the parties are informed that all information gathered at the conference will be used to evaluate the merits of the complaint. Attorneys from both sides are permitted to be present, but cannot answer questions for their clients, who are expected to respond directly to the Commission's questions.

### **VOLUNTARY SETTLEMENT**

The fact-finding conference serves several purposes. At the conference, the Commission identifies disputed points and determines what additional evidence is necessary to resolve those issues. The

Commission receives evidence and statements at the conference and clarifies outstanding issues. Also, efforts are made to secure a voluntary settlement between the parties without the necessity of a formal finding by the Commission. The Commission always encourages early settlement efforts, which benefit both parties. The respondent benefits by avoiding lengthy, potentially expensive litigation, which can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars even if they prevail. The complainant receives the benefit of settlement without having to wait years for resolution of their complaint, they can avoid thousands of dollars in attorney's fees, and they also avoid the risk of losing the case and getting nothing in the end.

### **MORE INVESTIGATION?**

In some cases, voluntary settlement is not secured after the two party fact-finding conference, and the information brought forth during the conference gives rise to further questions about what actually transpired. In this instance, further information is requested so that a recommended finding can be prepared.

### **REASONS WHY A FACT-FINDING CONFERENCE MAY NOT BE HELD**

In some cases, there may not be a fact-finding conference. Sometimes it is too inconvenient for the parties to be able to attend such a conference. The Commission might arrange a conference by telephone in this instance, or it may interview the parties separately. In some cases, the Commission may deem it more appropriate to conduct a field visit to the respondent's place of business, in lieu of a fact-finding conference. Also, since the fact-finding conference is a voluntary procedure, there are times when one of the parties will not cooperate and refuses to attend. Sometimes, enough evidence is acquired through witness interviews and documentary evidence, and a case conference is not necessary.

### **INVESTIGATION CONTINUES**

The investigation includes securing relevant documents, getting statements from witnesses and securing other relevant data necessary to address the charges. When necessary, the Commission has the power to subpoena pertinent information. This power is rarely, if ever, used. In our experience, once the respondent is informed that a subpoena will be forthcoming if they do not cooperate, they usually send the requested information. Having the power to subpoena is the key, not the actual issuance.

### **INVESTIGATOR RECOMMENDS A FINDING**

When the investigation is completed, the information that has been gathered is carefully analyzed and documented, and the investigator prepares a complete investigative report along with their recommended findings. This report is submitted to the principal investigator for review. If the principal investigator agrees with the finding, it is submitted to the executive director for further review.

### **FINDINGS**

The executive director reviews the file and the investigative report, and if she agrees with the findings, she signs off on the report. The Commission's recommended findings are then submitted to the NY State Division of Human Rights, who will either concur or reverse the findings of the

Commission. (It is very rare that the state does not concur with our findings.) If the State Division concurs with our “no probable cause” finding, the case is closed. If they concur with a “probable cause” finding, the case is scheduled for a formal public hearing before an administrative law judge. The administrative law judge has the authority to compel the respondent to make restitution to the complainant, in whatever amount the judge deems appropriate. For housing cases filed under the county’s local law, a hearing before an administrative law judge will be held at the county level, and fines may also be imposed.

### **NO PROBABLE CAUSE FINDING**

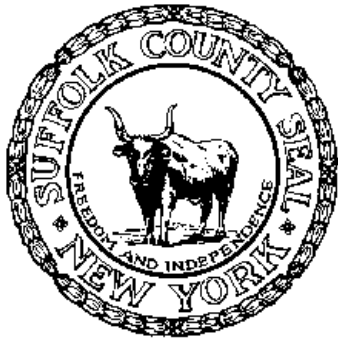
If it is determined that there is no probable cause to believe that an unlawful act of discrimination occurred, the complaint is dismissed. If it has been filed under Suffolk County Local Law, the individual can then appeal to the state if they disagree with the findings. If the complaint was filed with the state initially, the complainant has the right to file an appeal in state Supreme Court. If the complaint also charged a violation of federal law and was dually filed with the E.E.O.C., the individual can take their case to federal court if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the administrative process.

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### **THE COMMISSION’S POLICE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Executive Director Paulette Bartunek has made an effort to reach out to various communities to explain the Commission’s role in accepting police complaints. Pursuant to an Executive Order that dates back to 1971, the Commission can prepare complaints of undue force for citizens who feel that they were subjected to such behavior by Suffolk County police officers. After the complaints are signed and notarized, they are forwarded to the Police Commissioner, who may assign the matter to the Internal Affairs Bureau for investigation. A copy of the complaint is also sent to the County Executive. The police department reports the results of its investigation to the Commission at its completion. Although the Commission does not have the legal authority to investigate charges of this nature, we do keep records of complaints and as such, we are able to monitor the number of complaints coming in. We can then determine if there are any patterns with regard to a particular officer or precinct that the complaints are generated from. Should this occur, we would work along with the community and the police department in an attempt to resolve any problematic patterns or situations.

The total number of police complaints noted in our annual report reflects the allegations brought to us not only against the Suffolk County Police Department, but also against the local town and village police departments (which we do not have a similar procedure in place for). Citizens who feel they have been subjected to abusive behavior by local police officials are referred to the Commissioner of Police for that jurisdiction to report the allegations, and/or to an attorney for assistance in filing a claim in court.



# NEWS BULLETIN

## SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT of CIVIL SERVICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

PO Box 6100  
Building 158 - North County Complex  
Hauppauge, New York 11788-0099  
(631) 853-4402

**STEVE LEVY**  
Suffolk County Executive

**ALAN SCHNEIDER**  
Personnel Director

November 2009

For Your Information...

**LANDMARK LEGISLATION...** Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy signed landmark legislation implementing a local law that provides prospective cooperative buyers with protection against discriminatory approval practices.



The **Fairness in Cooperative Home Ownership Act** requires that cooperative boards provide a written explanation within 45 days if an ownership application is rejected, and provides enforcement power through the Human Rights Commission.

*“Cooperative home buyers face a unique set of circumstances that purchasers of single-family homes do not, in that approval is required from the board of directors,”* said Levy, who authored the legislation. *“This law will ensure that no cooperative home purchaser is denied because of their race, perceived race, ethnicity, creed, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation.”*

**EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS...** The New York State Human Rights Law was amended, effective **July 7, 2009**, to provide protection from employment discrimination for victims of domestic violence.

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual because they are a victim of domestic violence, in hiring for a job, job advancement, request for use of leave time, or other terms, conditions or privileges of employment.

It is also unlawful for an employer to take an action in retaliation for filing a complaint of discrimination.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against by your employer because you are a victim of domestic violence, you may contact the **Suffolk County Human Rights Commission** to file a complaint, at (631) 853-5480.

Information about your rights is also available on the Commission’s website, [www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org).



Steve Levy  
County Executive

# SUFFOLK COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

H. LEE DENNISON BUILDING - 1st FLOOR

100 VETERANS HIGHWAY

HAUPPAUGE NY 11788

[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)

• Contact us at

**(631) 853-5480**

• Visit our website at

[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)

## NYS Human Rights Law Expanded to Include Victims of Domestic Violence

***Effective July 2009, it became illegal for employers to discriminate against victims of domestic violence by refusing to hire, denying promotions, refusing requests for leave time, or subjection to other unequal terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because they are victims of domestic violence.***

To file a complaint with the  
Human Rights Commission  
Call (631) 853-5480

**The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission can now accept complaints from individuals who feel that their employer may have discriminated against them because they are a victim of domestic violence.**

Sometimes an employer finds out that you are a victim of domestic violence when they learn that you obtained an order of protection, or when the perpetrator comes to your worksite. ***Your employment may not be terminated simply because you are a victim of domestic violence.*** If the perpetrator is presenting a dangerous situation for you or other employees, the police should be called. Pursuant to NY Penal Law, it is also illegal for an employer to take action against an employee who is a victim of a crime for taking time off to appear in court as a witness, to consult with a district attorney, or to obtain an order of protection.

Also, victims of domestic violence must deal with complex and unique circumstances in their lives. They may need to take time off from work for medical or mental health care. The Human Rights Law requires employers to provide the same accommodation as they would for employees in other circumstances. Under the Human Rights Law, it would be discriminatory to treat a victim of domestic violence, who is trying to achieve financial independence from their abuser, any differently than employees who need time off for other reasons.

***It is also unlawful for an employer to retaliate against a victim for filing a complaint***

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Throughout 2009, the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission continued its ongoing efforts to participate in numerous community organizations and events. The Commission has always viewed outreach as a vitally important component of our mission, by having a presence at numerous community activities in order to maintain and foster a positive relationship with all the diverse communities in Suffolk. By interacting with various groups on a regular basis, we are able to disperse information to the public about the services our agency provides, increase the visibility of the Commission, and become more aware of what is happening in, and what the concerns are, of various communities; all of which is crucial to our mandate.

### **Below is a sample of our outreach activities in 2009:**

*The Unity Coalition*, organized by the NY State Division of Human Rights after the death of Marcelo Lucero, is an ongoing group that meets in Patchogue on a regular basis to work on ways to foster mutual understanding and respect. It is now beginning to expand to all of Suffolk County. The Commission has been involved in this organization from its inception.

We have also had a regular presence at the meetings of various other groups such as the *Suffolk County Anti-Bias Task Force*, the *Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board*, the *Council for Prejudice Reduction*, *Suffolk Community Council*, *Peconic Community Council*, *The Suffolk Center on the Holocaust, Diversity, & Human Understanding*, the *Legislative Review Committee for Siting of Memorials and Symbols*, and the *Suffolk County Executive's Unity Day Planning Committee*.

### **Additionally, we participated in numerous events in 2009, such as:**

- ❖ *The Suffolk County Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission's Annual Luncheon*
- ❖ *The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Annual Memorial Breakfast*
- ❖ *A Community Meeting held at Long Island Gay And Lesbian Youth (LIGALY) in response to an act of vandalism at the organization's headquarters*
- ❖ *County Executive Steve Levy's Community Meeting regarding tax grievances in over-assessed minority areas*
- ❖ *The Suffolk County African American Advisory Board's student seminar on "Opening the Door of Opportunity One Degree at a Time"*
- ❖ *Central Islip School District's Human Rights Day*
- ❖ *"Raising the Curtain on Unity" event, Patchogue Theatre*
- ❖ *Health Care Disparities Program at Touro Law Center*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Anti-Bias Task Force Annual Breakfast Convocation*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Office of Minority Affairs' Unity Day*

- ❖ *Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force public hearings in Wyandanch, Patchogue, Brentwood, and Riverhead*
- ❖ *Suffolk Community Council's Unity Project Planning Meetings*
- ❖ *The Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center Public Interest/Government Job Fair*
- ❖ *Meeting with African American Advisory Board Representatives about our Fair Housing Law*
- ❖ *Eastern Suffolk BOCES Strategic Planning Council*
- ❖ *Southern Poverty Law Center's Press Conference on the release of its report, "Climate of Fear- Latino Immigrants in Suffolk County, NY"*
- ❖ *Annual Breakfast Meeting of the Suffolk Community Council*
- ❖ *Long Island SOMOS EL FUTURO Conference, "The Fierce Urgency of Now"*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Muslim-American Advisory Board's Eid and End of Ramadan Eid Mubarik Celebration Event*
- ❖ *Embracing Our Differences Recognition Ceremony, LI Museum in Stony Brook*
- ❖ *The 28<sup>th</sup> Celebration of Solidarity between the Jewish and Italian American Communities*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Task Force to Prevent Family Violence, "The Changing Face of Domestic Violence" event and building illumination in commemoration of Domestic Violence Awareness Month*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force Community Group Presentations*
- ❖ *Brentwood Public Library's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Community Organization Fair for Hispanic Heritage Month*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Executive's "Festival of Lights" celebrating the Indian Festival of Diwali*
- ❖ *Long Island WINS Presentation on Immigration and Law Enforcement, Touro College*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Office of Minority Health's Conference, "Taking the Road to Eliminate Health Disparities"*
- ❖ *Suffolk County's Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration*
- ❖ *The National Indo-American Association for Senior Citizens Annual Conference*
- ❖ *Council for Prejudice Reduction's Annual Conference, "Reducing Prejudice – a Matter of Education"*

- ❖ *Prayer Meeting and Community Gathering in Support of William Batista, Jr. and a Peaceful Community*
- ❖ *American Philosophical Association's event, "Migrant Laborers Building the Masters' House: Enslaved Africans, Indentured Coolies, and Latino Contract Workers," co-sponsored by the APA's Committee on Hispanics, the Committee on Blacks, and the Committee on Asian-American Philosophies*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Bar Association's Diversity Symposium*
- ❖ *Suffolk County Youth Bureau's Student Congress for J.U.S.T.I.C.E.*
- ❖ *"Getting it Right on Long Island: Immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;" a forum sponsored by LI WINS and the Immigration Alliance*
- ❖ *Independence Long Island's Celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act*

## **Training**

Suffolk County Human Rights Commission staff also provides training about the Human Rights Law and the services our agency provides to various community groups, educational institutions, and businesses. In 2009, we conducted training sessions for the ***Suffolk County Police Academy***, the staff of the ***Mattituck-Cutchogue School District***, the staff of ***Catholic Charities***, over 200 students at the ***Robert Moses Middle School*** in North Babylon, and over 120 supervisory employees of the ***Town of Brookhaven***. We also had an information table at the ***Suffolk County Unity Day*** event and at ***Brentwood Library's Annual Community Organization Fair***, co-sponsored by the LI Hispanic Business Roundtable.

In July 2009, the NY State Human Rights Law was amended to include victims of domestic violence as a protected category under the employment discrimination provisions of the law. Since we also enforce state law through our memorandum with the NY State Division of Human Rights, we have undertaken an initiative to inform the public and employers of this significant change to the law. We developed a flyer in English and Spanish which has already been widely distributed. We conducted training sessions for the ***Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk, Inc.***, and we were available for discussion and questions at the ***Library Business Connection's*** breakfast meeting, "Domestic Violence as a Workplace Issue, held at the ***Middle Country Library***. In 2010, we will be making presentations about this to numerous agencies, including the ***Suffolk County Task Force to Prevent Domestic Violence***, and ***Brighter Tomorrows, Inc.***

In terms of staff development, in 2009 our investigative staff had the opportunity to receive housing tester training through ***Long Island Housing Services, Inc.***, which provided them with information on how to effectively use testing as a method for uncovering illegal discrimination in housing cases. They also participated in a training session given by the ***Hellen Keller Institute***, on dealing with disabled individuals, specifically those who are deaf and/or legally blind, which was sponsored by ***Congressman Steve Israel***, as well as training on Megan's Law, provided by ***Parents for Megan's Law*** and the ***Crime Victim's Center***.

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## THE SUFFOLK COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION 2009 AWARDS DINNER

**MAY 14, 2009**

Over 100 people attended our Awards Dinner, held at the beautiful *Windows on the Lake* in Lake Ronkonkoma. We were honored that both **County Executive Steve Levy** and **Suffolk County District Court Judge William Ford** were able to take time from their hectic schedules to make thought-provoking and inspirational presentations to the group. **The Suffolk County Police Department's Emerald Society Pipe Band** added to the festivities.

### **Our Award Recipients**

There were many, many worthy people nominated who are doing great things for the cause of equal opportunity and human rights here in Suffolk County. The Awards Committee had a difficult task in making its final choices. But, as always, the committee did a wonderful job and those selected for this prestigious award can all be proud of their amazing accomplishments.

It was truly an incredible group of awardees in 2009. Between them, **Gloria Tarsy** and **Madeline Patterson** have logged thousands upon thousands of volunteer hours in the foster grandparents program. **Matt Bessell** has spent over twenty years working for the veterans and employees at the Northport VA Medical Center. We also honored a teacher whose creative programs to celebrate diversity are growing year by year – **Jason McGowan**. **Richard Koubek** has worked tirelessly to promote affordable housing on Long Island. The newly-formed **Unity Coalition** is a group of committed citizens that have accomplished an amazing amount after being in existence for just a few months. And **Ruth Trujillo's** commitment to social justice makes her a truly inspiring individual. Congratulations to them all!

### **More About Our 2009 Human Rights Awardees**

This year, two wonderful people were awarded the

#### **ELIZABETH GUANILL MEMORIAL AWARD FOR VOLUNTEERISM**

Both women are Suffolk County seniors who volunteer as part of the Federation of Organizations' Foster Grandparent Program, which pairs low-income seniors with at-risk children in elementary schools, preschools, Head Start centers, and other community locations.

#### **Gloria Tarsy**

Gloria Tarsy, who is 87 years old, volunteers as a Foster Grandparent at Terryville Elementary School in Port Jefferson Station. She is an active and effective advocate for the needs of children in her community, successfully securing donations of school supplies and clothing for the children. Gloria is also an advocate for individuals with mental illness and has worked to raise money and awareness for the National Association for Mental Illness. Prior to her retirement from Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, where she became the 4th woman in the company to be named an officer, she advocated to employ persons with disabilities and mentored several individuals with special needs who were eventually promoted to high-level positions.

### **Madeline Patterson**

Madeline Patterson has lived her life as an example to others. This year marks her 23rd year of being a Foster Grandparent, through which she has donated over 20,000 hours of time to help children with special needs, currently at Alternatives for Children located in Setauket. Helping children is not the only cause near to Madeline's heart. In 1959, she was interviewed for a local news program as a result of her efforts in relation to a crackdown on realtors who were steering African Americans into "black-only" neighborhoods in Brooklyn. She marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1964 for civil rights, and advocated for equal opportunity in the South.

## **THE LAWRENCE TIMPA AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

### **Matthew Bessell, R-LCSW**

Matthew Bessell is a clinical social worker who has served America's veterans for over twenty years as an employee of the Northport VA Medical Center. From 2000 to 2007 he served as the Medical Center's first EEO Native American Special Emphasis Program Manager. In his leadership of the Native American EEO Special Emphasis Program Committee, Matthew sought to increase cultural competency among VA staff on relevant aspects of Native American culture and implement appropriate strategies to increase employment opportunities, and the retention and advancement of Native Americans. Of his many accomplishments while in this role, he established the Council of Area Native American Veteran Elder Advisors, to provide essential guidance in outreach and community networking with First Nations people.

Matthew is currently working as the EEO Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Employee Group Manager. His strong commitment to human rights led Matthew to get a message out to all employees in 2001 to honor LGBT Pride Month. In 2007, he presented the VAMC Northport Acting Director with a request to form an LGBT Employees Group Special Emphasis group. Now in its second year, it is one of only two such groups in the VA nationwide.

## **THE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATION**

### **Jason McGowan**

Jason McGowan utilizes creative and engaging activities to promote individual human rights at Amityville Memorial High School. He began five years ago with *Awareness Weekend*, which involves guest speakers, whole group sharing, acceptance and celebrating diversity. 100-120 students, along with 15-18 staff members, spend time in family groups from Friday evening until late Sunday evening. Activities and communication exercises are geared to break down walls and build bridges. Through this unusual event, the participants gain profound insights into themselves and each other. They foster a sense of respect and acceptance that does not end when the weekend is over. The AW program provides Amityville's multi-cultural population with an opportunity to understand their similarities and celebrate their uniqueness. Four years ago, Mr. McGowan added a *Freshman Awareness Day*. Similar in nature to the *Awareness Weekend*, this full-day program helps 9th grade students acclimate. In 2009, Mr. McGowan expanded his promotion of human rights beyond his school walls, with the implementation of a *Cultural Awareness Program*. It involved 40 students from Plainedge High School spending a full day at Amityville Memorial High School. This exchange allowed students to experience diversity first-hand, and helped students from both schools broaden their views of people who are different from themselves.

## **THE CHAIRPERSON'S AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Richard Koubek, Ph.D.**

Through his efforts, too numerous to list here in their entirety, Dr. Koubek has helped to raise public awareness about the need for affordable housing and has trained hundreds of advocates to become a voice for affordable housing in their own communities.

Dr. Richard Koubek has been a member of the Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation's (WHPDC) Board of Directors since 1986. He has worked directly with WHPDC to house homeless people while preparing them for lives of self sufficiency. In addition, he has volunteered over the past decade to create successful and challenging educational programs and advocacy actions. These measures address the critical shortage of affordable housing in his town of Huntington and throughout Long Island, and address the prejudices against poor people which contribute to the lack of equal opportunities in housing. Dr. Koubek has also volunteered as an affordable housing educator and advocate in the Town of Huntington, as a member of the Huntington Township Housing Coalition (HTHC) since 2000. He is currently serving as the Coalition's President. Since 2004, he has also volunteered as Chair of the Huntington Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing Now (ICAHN), which is a coalition of 15 Huntington congregations that approach the lack of affordable housing from a faith perspective. He helped to create the Huntington Interfaith Homeless Initiative (HIHI), an interfaith program that houses homeless people in various Huntington congregations from November through March of each year. Dr. Koubek also currently volunteers as a member of the Mobilized Interfaith Coalition Against Hunger (MICAH), an interfaith anti-poverty campaign which he launched during his last year as Public Policy Administrator at Catholic Charities.

## **SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD**

### **Ruth Trujillo-Pertew**

Ruth Trujillo-Pertew is dedicated to working for social justice. She was born and raised in El Salvador, and her family migrated to the U.S. in the 1990's. She holds a B.A. in Spanish Languages and Literature from Stony Brook University and is currently the recipient of the Burkhardt Fellowship, through which she is completing her Master's Degree in Social Work, also from Stony Brook University.

As part of her social work internship she worked at Suffolk Community Council, Inc. where she coordinated the Unity Project. There, she worked with a committee of professionals in the social services to help improve the perception of immigrants in the community, focusing on day laborers in the Brentwood area. Seeking a pragmatic solution to the problems faced by communities with day laborers, the project was guided by the workers themselves. Ruth worked as a liaison between the Brentwood day laborers, the Unity Project, the Suffolk County Police Department, and the community. Educational workshops were provided, such as leadership training and English classes. Informational sessions were held by representatives from community organizations like Adelante. Communication was opened up and enhanced between the workers and the police department. A community clean-up was organized where the workers participated alongside other members of the community, enhancing communication and understanding. A clothing drive provided much needed coats to the workers for the winter months. The project has been a great success and can serve as a model for other communities.

Ruth's other community projects include the organization of a colloquium that gathered high school and college students to explore community issues affecting current immigrants to Long Island, and she played a crucial role in the planning and execution of a fundraiser for the Eastern Farm Workers Association (where she volunteered from 2003 to 2007), the first ever "Super Bowl Tamale Benefit," which helped to ensure the continuation of winter assistance programs for low income families and migrant workers in Suffolk County.

### **SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD**

#### **The Unity Coalition**

The Unity Coalition is an alliance initiated by the New York State Division of Human Rights, Patchogue Mayor Paul Pontieri, Suffolk County Legislator Jack Eddington, New York State Assemblymember Patricia Eddington, local community advocates and concerned residents of the Patchogue and Medford communities as a response to the bias-related murder of Ecuadorian immigrant Marcelo Lucero in November 2008. The mission of the Unity Coalition is to promote mutual understanding and respect among all members of our communities and to develop strategies to prevent acts of discrimination and hate. The Unity Coalition has three subcommittees: Educating Youth; Educating Policy Makers; and Cultural Affairs and Media. The Unity Coalition plans to continue its work in the Patchogue/Medford area and hopefully expand in the future to meet the needs of other communities in Suffolk County, as well.

This wonderful event could not have been possible without the Commission's Awards Committee:

***Augustus G. Mantia, M.D., Chair***

***Mary Abad***

***Lynda Perdomo-Ayala***

***Rachel Lee Davis***

***Michele T. Del Monte***

***Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss***

***Raj Prasad, and***

***Patricia Hill Williams, Ed.D.***

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Steve Levy  
County Executive

## **THE SUFFOLK COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

is here to help you!

*Suffolk County now has a local law to address*

### **HOUSING DISCRIMINATION**

*Victims of discrimination related to the sale or rental of housing or commercial space in Suffolk County should contact the Commission immediately!*

**As always, if you have been the victim of DISCRIMINATION in EMPLOYMENT, CREDIT, PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION OR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING**

**Call the Commission at:**

**631-853-5480**

**or Email:**

**[HumanRights@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:HumanRights@suffolkcountyny.gov)**

You may make an appointment to speak with an Investigator in either Hauppauge or Riverhead, if you believe that you have been treated unfairly in any of the above areas because of your:

**RACE, COLOR, CREED, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, DISABILITY, AGE, SEX, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, MARITAL STATUS, FAMILIAL STATUS, MILITARY STATUS, ARREST RECORD, CONVICTION RECORD OR PREDISPOSING GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS, OR BECAUSE YOU ARE A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Our professional staff will assess your allegations and your options will be clearly explained. Of course, as a county agency, there is no charge for our services!**

**Hauppauge (Main) Office:**

H. Lee Dennison Building  
100 Veterans Memorial Highway  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Hauppauge, NY 11788  
Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm

**Riverhead Office:**

Riverhead County Center  
310 Center Drive  
Room S47  
Riverhead, NY 11901  
Hours: Tuesdays 10:00am to 4:00pm

The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission's mission is to work toward the elimination of bias and discrimination. Our services also include providing speakers to community groups and businesses to explain the law and assist in the prevention of complaints.

*Feel free to call for confidential advice and assistance.*

Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss  
Chairperson

Visit our website!  
**[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)**

Paulette M. Bartunek  
Executive Director



Steve Levy  
Ejecutivo del Condado

## LA COMISIÓN DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS DEL CONDADO DE SUFFOLK

¡està aqui para ayudarle!

*El Condado de Suffolk ahora tiene una ley local para enforzar*

### **DISCRIMINACIÓN DE VIVIENDA**

*Víctimas de discriminación relacionada con la venta o alquiler de vivienda o locales comerciales en el Condado de Suffolk deben de contactar a la Comisión inmediatamente!*

**Al igual, si usted ha sido víctima de DISCRIMINACIÓN en EMPLEO, CRÉDITO, LUGARES PÚBLICOS O BOMBEROS VOLUNTARIOS**

**Llame a la Comisión al:**

**631-853-5480**

**o escribanos a nuestra Dirección Electrónica:**

**[HumanRights@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:HumanRights@suffolkcountyny.gov)**

Usted puede hacer una cita para hablar con un(a) investigador(a) en cualquiera de nuestras oficinas que se encuentran localizadas en Hauppauge o Riverhead, si usted cree que ha sido tratado injustamente en una de las areas arriba indicadas debido a su:

**RAZA, COLOR, CREDO, RELIGIÓN, NACIONALIDAD, INCAPACIDAD, EDAD, SEXO, ORIENTACIÓN SEXUAL, ESTADO CIVIL, ESTADO FAMILIAR, ESTADO MILITAR, ANTECEDENTES DE ARRESTO O CONDENAS O CARACTERÍSTICAS DE PREDISPOSICIÓN GENÉTICA, O POR SER VÍCTIMA DE VIOLENCIA DOMÉSTICA**

**Nuestro personal profesional evaluará su queja y sus opciones serán explicadas en forma clara. ¡Por supuesto que por ser una agencia del condado, no cobramos por nuestro servicio!**

**Oficina (Central)Hauppauge:**

H. Lee Dennison Building  
100 Veterans Memorial Highway  
1° Piso  
Hauppauge, NY 11788  
Horas: Lunes-Viernes 9:00am a 5:00pm

**Oficina de Riverhead:**

Riverhead County Center  
310 Center Drive  
Room S47  
Riverhead, NY 11901  
Horas: Martes 10:00am a 4:00pm

El objetivo de la Comisión de los Derechos Humanos del Condado de Suffolk es trabajar para lograr la eliminación del prejuicio y la discriminación. Nuestros servicios también incluyen el proveer presentaciones para grupos en la comunidad, escuelas y negocios para explicar las leyes y asistir en la prevención de querellas.

*Llámenos con toda libertad para un consejo confidencial y nuestra ayuda.*

Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss  
Presidente

Visite nuestra página de internet!  
**[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)**

Paulette M. Bartunek  
Directora Ejecutiva

# **The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission**

## **Commission Members**

Rabbi Dr. Steven A. Moss,  
Chairperson

Lynda Perdomo-Ayala, CSW,  
Vice Chair

Edgar Borrero, M.D.

Chestene Coverdale

Rachel Lee Davis

Michele T. Del Monte

Mark J. Epstein, Esq.

Nayyar Imam

Augustus G. Mantia, M.D.

Gary R. Mar, Ph.D.

Carolyn G. Peabody, Ph.D.

Raj Prasad

Yu-Wan Wang, Ed.D.

## **Staff**

Paulette M. Bartunek,  
Executive Director

Jennifer Blaske,  
Principal Investigator

Lorena Gonzalez, Investigator

James L. Kokindo, Investigator

Cecilia Soto, Investigator,  
Spanish-speaking

Barbara Johnson,  
Clerk-typist

Egda Villalobos,  
Clerk-typist, Spanish-speaking

**[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)**

# **The Suffolk County Human Rights Commission**

**(631) 853-5480**

## **Hauppauge Office**

(Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm)

**H. Lee Dennison Bldg., 1st Floor  
100 Veterans Memorial Highway  
P.O. Box 6100  
Hauppauge, NY 11788**

## **Riverhead Office**

(Tuesdays, by appointment)

**Riverhead County Center  
310 Center Drive, Room S47  
Riverhead, NY 11901**

**[www.SuffolkHumanRights.org](http://www.SuffolkHumanRights.org)**



The SCHRC's objective is to work toward the elimination of bias and discrimination. We investigate complaints alleging violations of federal, state, and local human rights laws, mainly in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodation.

If you have been a victim of discrimination because of your race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, military status, arrest or conviction record, or predisposing genetic characteristics, or because you are a victim of domestic violence, please call our office to speak with an investigator or contact us through our website.

We also provide training and technical assistance to organizations and individuals to promote and encourage voluntary compliance with the law and to promote positive intergroup relations.